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- Judiciary (*ranking member*)
- Transportation
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- Local Government

SIGN UP FOR MY E-MAIL UPDATES

If you would like to stay connected with what's happening in your citizen Legislature, please consider signing up for my e-mail updates. You may do so by going to my legislative Web site or contacting me directly.

5th Legislative District

An update from your citizen Legislature
State Representative Jay Rodne

May 2012

Dear Friend:

I hope this newsletter finds you well.

Communicating with those I represent in the Washington State House of Representatives is an important part of my job. While I have held traditional and telephone town hall meetings, sent out e-mail updates, spoken to community groups, and met with constituents in my office, this is the first legislative newsletter I have mailed since May 2010. In this time, a lot has happened and I would like to provide you an update on your citizen Legislature.

Many people have expressed their concerns with what is happening in Olympia. They are upset about six special sessions in two years, operating budgets that are not sustainable, the struggling economy, and the lack of funding and reform for K-12 education. I share these concerns and talk about how we can address them in this newsletter.

While our state continues to face challenges, we know they can be overcome by the talents and resiliency of Washingtonians. They just need Olympia to work for them, not against them. I can tell you from first-hand experience the Legislature does not lack the necessary solutions and diversity of ideas to meet these challenges – it just lacks the leadership needed to allow them to move forward.

While the legislative sessions are hopefully over for 2012, please remember I am your full-time state representative. I am always just a call, e-mail or letter away from assisting you.

Best regards,

A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jay Rodne".

Jay Rodne



Representative Jay Rodne

RESPONSIBLE USE OF TAX DOLLARS

State operating budget



The state operating budget pays for our public schools, social services, prisons, debt service, and other areas of state government. The Legislature has spent six special sessions in the last two years trying to balance this \$31 billion state spending plan. I have heard from many constituents who are frustrated by these outcomes and the extra costs that come with them. I share these frustrations.

The simple truth is Olympia has not adjusted to economic realities. In these tough times, individuals, families and small businesses have sacrificed and adjusted their spending accordingly. The Legislature has not made the same choices and the final operating budget agreement this year, which I voted against, exemplifies this fact.

For example, the operating budget only leaves \$319 million in reserves. When you consider \$238 million is the result of a new accounting maneuver for local sales tax payments, the real reserve number is closer to \$81 million. This is not a responsible amount given the fact we have more than a year left in our budget cycle and tax collections continue to be volatile.

Secondly, for the most part, the operating budget preserves the status quo in Olympia. Most state agencies will continue to function in the same ways they did before. This represents a missed opportunity to enact true reforms.

Ensuring sustainable state spending

I have three simple principles for the operating budget that guide my views and votes.

First, our state should never plan to spend more than it expects to take in. Plain and simple. If we follow this rule, then new tax increases will never have to be on the table.

Secondly, the operating budget should be based on priorities. I believe the priorities of state government are education, public safety and protecting our most vulnerable citizens. Transportation and capital construction are also priorities, but they are handled in separate budgets. Our state must return to the bipartisan, priorities of government budget model used by **Governor Gary Locke** and **State Senator Dino Rossi**. It worked then and it would work now.

Finally, operating budgets need to be sustainable. One of the problems we have seen in the Legislature is the implementation of policies without adequate consideration of costs in future budget cycles. This problem was rampant when state spending exploded from 2005 to 2008, and we are still digging out from this hole today.

A FOUR-YEAR OUTLOOK BUDGET MODEL

I was happy to vote for **Senate Bill 6636** this year. This major budget reform will require the operating budget to be balanced not only in the current two-year budget cycle, but also the next two-year cycle. This will force state lawmakers to give greater consideration to the long-term costs of their decisions. This will hopefully ensure more budget sustainability.

A "thank you" to our outgoing state auditor

Our **State Auditor Brian Sonntag** has done a great job of not only identifying problems in state government, but making recommendations on how to address them. State lawmakers need to act on more of these recommendations. Brian has announced he is not running for office again. I would like to thank him for his service and what he has done for our state.

CREATING JOBS AND REVITALIZING OUR ECONOMY

The greatest disappointment for me over the last few years is the Legislature's lack of attention to our economy. Instead of looking inward to find ways to help employers on Main Street, too many state lawmakers have resorted to blaming Wall Street for all of our state's economic problems. I am not defending the actions of big banks and they need to be held accountable. But the reality is they don't have anything to do with most of the challenges our state's business climate presents employers.

Solutions

Every state lawmaker should be asking the question, "What can we do to improve our state's business climate, create jobs and revitalize our economy?" When I talk to small-business owners, they provide clear answers. We need to act on these answers so they can be successful, grow and hire.

While important changes were made to our workers' compensation system last year, which should lower costs for employers, the Legislature seemed to stop there. We need to explore more reforms that could lower costs in not only this system, but our unemployment insurance system.

I supported bills that would have reduced regulatory burdens on employers, incentivized startups, provided consistency in the permitting process, and simplified and reduced the number of tax rates for small businesses. These measures could not even get public hearings. Our employers deserve to have their voices heard in this type of forum.

I have faith in the resiliency and talents of Washingtonians, but they need to know that Olympia is working for them – not against them.

2012 Legislative Report

5th District



STRONG SCHOOLS, SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

We know our economy is changing and our students must be prepared for the various paths offered to them after high school. If our students are going to be successful academically, they need a great principal in every school and a great teacher in every classroom.

I was proud to support legislation that will reform how we evaluate educators in our schools. **Senate Bill 5895** will create a new framework for a teacher and principal evaluation system in our state. The new system will be based on a successful pilot program. Instead of the "satisfactory" or "not satisfactory" evaluation system currently used by most school districts today, the new framework will utilize a four-tiered professional growth and development system.

State Supreme Court says state is not amply funding K-12 education

A question I often get from concerned parents and educators is, "Are we living up to our paramount duty?" Our state Supreme Court gave us the answer in a ruling last January: "no."

In its *McCleary v. State* decision, our state Supreme Court said the state has not met its constitutional duty to make ample provision for the education of its children. The court also said that reforms enacted in 2009 and 2010, if fully funded, will solve the problem. I voted for these bills and the court said it will monitor their implementation.

Fund Education First

One way to guarantee our K-12 education system is adequately funded is to fund it first in a stand-alone budget. I co-sponsored legislation that would implement this solution. **House Bill 2533**, titled Fund Education First, would require the Legislature to pass a separate K-12 education budget before any other appropriations. It received a hearing and had bipartisan support, but was not allowed a vote in committee.

Our state already has separate budgets for transportation and capital construction, so it only stands to reason that our top priority – K-12 education – should have its own budget. Fund Education First would ensure our state meets its constitutional "paramount duty."

PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITIES

Combating the commercial sex trade



The commercial sex trade is a worldwide problem and Washington state is unfortunately not immune. As we have learned more about the dynamics of this issue, the details are sad. Our **State Attorney General Rob McKenna** has done a great job of creating awareness and bringing solutions forward to fight this problem.

House Bill 1983 will increase the penalties for those convicted of promoting prostitution to \$3,000 for a first offense, \$6,000 for a second offense and \$10,000 for a third or subsequent offense. Prior to this legislation, the penalty for promoting prostitution was only \$300 for a first offense.

The bill will direct the revenue to local jurisdictions to help pay for increased law enforcement and prevention measures. It also sends a firm message to anyone who would consider participating in this type of crime.



Rep. Jay Rodne speaks on the House floor.

Representative Jay Rodne

SAVE THE DATE

TELEPHONE TOWN HALL MEETING



Tuesday, June 19

6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

It is easy to join in our community conversation. Just call **1-877-229-8493** and enter code **15549**. Once connected, you can ask me questions, share your views or just listen in from the comfort of your own home.

STAY CONNECTED TO YOUR CITIZEN LEGISLATURE

Helpful Web sites

A Citizen's Guide to Effective Legislative Participation	http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature/Pages/EffectiveParticipation.aspx
Visiting the Capitol	http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature/pages/visitingthelegislature.aspx
House Page Program	http://www.leg.wa.gov/House/Pages/HousePageProgram.aspx
Civic Education	http://www.leg.wa.gov/civiced
Bill Information	http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo
Washington Courts	http://www.courts.wa.gov
Washington State Legislature	http://www.leg.wa.gov
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